

HAUN'S MILL MASSACRE AND LEHI'S MAYOR DAVID EVANS

By John K. Haws Jr.

The Community of Christ Church has given the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints a gift for this 24th of July Celebration by selling to the Church the Haun's Mill Massacre site in Missouri. Haun's Mill is a sacred historic site to the Latter-Day Saints people. Less is known about the significance to the City and citizens of Lehi,. David Evans, Lehi's first Bishop and second Mayor, played a significant role in the Haun's Mill Massacre. He was the presiding religious leader and captain of the militia of Haun's Mill Saints at the time of the massacre.

Bishop Evans led a significant role of leadership in many historical events of Latter-Day Saints history. David Evans was a member of the School of the Prophets where he was taught at the feet of Joseph Smith in the Kirtland Temple.

Bishop Evans volunteered as one of the faithful 200 men who made the 1,000 mile Zions Camp march from Kirtland, Ohio to Clay County, Missouri. From among those willing to make the march, the prophet Joseph Smith chose His First Quorum of Twelve Apostles and the First Council of Seventy. Joseph Smith and his two counselors Sidney Rigdon and Oliver Cowdery set apart David Evans as a member of this First Council of Seventy on February 27, 1835.

He was the presiding Church priesthood authority at Haun's Mill and was captain of the Militia there. He built his home one mile and a half north of the Mill. He was a great missionary at Haun's Mill. His fervent missionary spirit led to numerous conversions wherever he resided. One of his conversions at Haun's Mill was the family of Barbara Ann Ewell who later became one of his wives in Lehi. He also converted the family of David Norton. David Norton became one of his closest friends. David Norton family followed him to Lehi and later

built his home right next to David Evans in the Old Fort .

David Evans was a major player in the tragedy at Haun's Mill. He struggled as the leader to try to prevent the tragedy. He was part of a three man negotiation team of , David Evans, Jacob Myers Sr., and Anthony Blackburn who tried to meet with leaders of the Anti-Mormon movements. The David Evans group negotiated with leaders of several vigilante groups on several different occasions. One was held at the Myer's homestead situated a few miles east of Haun's Mill. President Evans deliberated a truce with mob leader Nehemiah Comstock at which time both parties agreed to abandon their military organization. These negotiations did not stop the effect of Governor Bogg's Extermination Order.

On the 30th of October , 1838, a mob of 240 men approached Haun's Mill from the north. The Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in a journal of Ellis Eamut reported, "While women and children sought cover in streambed and distant forest, the blacksmith shop turned into a death trap for defenders. David Evans swung his hat and cried for peace.

David Evans made a second attempt to end the attack. He and Nathan Knight ran out of the building pleading for a truce. Knight was shot in the hand. When it was clear the attack would continue, Evans and Knight ran toward the creek for safety. Knight received two more wounds, but escaped by running up a hill on the south side of the stream. Evans covered the same distance unharmed."

The Vigilante group stopped firing after the last group of boys left the shop. The group stripped the wounded and dead of their clothing and boots. Three boys were found hiding and were shot. While some succeeded in escaping with their lives, seventeen defenders were killed outright or mortally wounded. Only four men survived the attack on the Mill of which one was

Bishop David Evans.

“Because the attack was unprovoked in a time of truce, had no specific authorization, and was made by a vastly superior force with unusual brutality,” according to the Encyclopedia of Mormonism, “it has come to be known as “The Haun's Mill Massacre.” The Saints lefts Haun’s Mill and headed from Illinois.

Bishop Evans went on to become the Bishop of the Nauvoo 11th Ward. Ten years later, in 1845, Brigham Young appointed David as a captain of a pioneer company of Saints. His company arrived in Salt Lake in September 1850. He was called by Brigham Young to go and be Bishop of the Dry Creek Saints in Lehi. It became known as Evansville and then changed to Lehi. He led the Lehi Saints through the hard LDS Reformation and the Camp Floyd eras of Lehi History. He was elected the second Mayor of Lehi. He was elected to the first State Legislature and was Lehi’s first postmaster.

Today his ancestors are found in leadership positions in government, church and business within Lehi City. In 2001, a statue in his honor was dedicated in Pioneer Park in Lehi by his ancestors. Someday, if the church develops Haun’s Mill as a historical site, Lehi citizens may want to help participate in building of a David Evans home one and a half mile north of the Mill as a monument to its’ founding leader. Hauns Mill should have a significant place in the hearts of the Lehi citizens.